

News Release  
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### **U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Proposes Endangered Species Act Protection for Two Freshwater Mussels**

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has proposed Endangered Species Act protection for the rayed bean and the snuffbox, two freshwater mussels found in river systems in the eastern United States.

The rayed bean is currently found in rivers in Indiana, Michigan, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania and West Virginia, as well as Ontario, Canada. The snuffbox occurs in Alabama, Arkansas, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Virginia, West Virginia, Wisconsin, and Ontario, Canada.

Populations of both species have declined dramatically. The rayed bean has been eliminated from 75 percent of its historical range, and the snuffbox has disappeared from 65 percent of the streams in which it was historically found.

Threats to both the rayed bean and the snuffbox include loss and degradation of stream and river habitat due to impoundments, channelization, chemical contaminants, mining and sedimentation. Freshwater mussels require clean water; their decline often signals a decline in the water quality of the streams and rivers they inhabit.

The Service's proposal, published on November 2, 2010, in the Federal Register, initiates a public comment period during which the Service will gather information on the two mussels. The Service will make final decision on whether to extend Endangered Species Act protection to the rayed bean and snuffbox after evaluating all available information. If the two mussels are listed under the Endangered Species Act, the Service will work cooperatively with partners to conserve their habitats.

It is illegal under the ESA to kill, harm or otherwise "take" a listed species, or to possess, import, export or conduct interstate or international commerce without authorization from the Service. The ESA also requires all federal agencies to ensure actions they authorize, fund, or undertake do not jeopardize the existence of listed species.

Comments may be submitted using one of the following methods: Federal eRulemaking Portal: <http://www.regulations.gov>. Follow the instructions for submitting comments.

- U.S. mail or hand-delivery: Public Comments Processing, Attn: RIN 1018–AV96; Division of Policy and Directives Management; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; 4401 N. Fairfax Drive, Suite 222; Arlington, VA 22203.

In particular, the Service is looking for information on distribution, status, population size or trends; life history; and threats to these species. The comment period ends on January 3, 2011.

More information on mussels and endangered wildlife can be found at [www.midwest.gov/endangered](http://www.midwest.gov/endangered)

The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife, plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. We are both a leader and trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation, known for our scientific excellence, stewardship of lands and natural resources, dedicated professionals and commitment to public service. For more information on our work and the people who make it happen, visit [www.fws.gov](http://www.fws.gov).